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# PETITION

## TO HIS MOST GRACIOUS MAJESTY, GEORGE THE FIFTH, BY THE GRACE OF GOD OF GREAT BRITAIN, IRELAND, AND THE BRITISH DOMINIONS BEYOND THE SEAS, KING, DEFENDER OF THE FAITH, EMPEROR OF INDIA.

DATED MAY 1935.

THE HUMBLE PETITION of the undersigned women residing in many parts of Your Majesty's Dominions.

SHEWETH

(1) That in this auspicious year of Your Majesty's Jubilee, which heralds twenty-five years of a momentous reign during which in many of Your Majesty's Dominions the political status of women has changed for the better to a degree never paralleled throughout the course of history. Your Petitioners renewing before Your Majesty our faithful and devoted allegiance hope and believe that Your Majesty will help to further this political progress by aiding in the removal of one outstanding anomaly set forth below.

(2) That by a series of Acts of different Parliaments within the British Commonwealth of Nations, beginning with the United Kingdom Act of 1870, the right previously enjoyed by the British woman to keep her British nationality after marriage with a foreigner has been taken away from her, so that to-day many a British-born woman is treated as an alien in her own country and refused British protection abroad, though she may even see her children given the British nationality which she is herself denied.

(3) That such a British-born woman married to a foreigner is unable to make application for naturalisation as a British subject and cannot swear allegiance to Your Majesty owing to the legal disability which she at present shares with minors and lunatics.

(4) That the foreign woman who marries a British man has British nationality conferred upon her even when she does not desire it, and without being required to take the oath of allegiance to Your Majesty, however unsuitable she may be for inclusion among Your Majesty's loyal subjects.

(5) That in Canada, the United Kingdom and New Zealand a British woman keeps her nationality when she marries a foreigner unless by the law of her husband's country she acquires his, in which case she automatically loses her British nationality, with the exception that in New Zealand she can choose to remain British within that country; and there are thus many women half British and half alien, British in these countries and alien in some other parts of the British Commonwealth.

(6) That it is against the interest and derogatory to the dignity of all women and especially of the married woman and to her loyal allegiance to Yourself as her Sovereign for her nationality and allegiance to depend upon the nationality of her husband or upon his country's law.

(7) That in 1931 the delegate from the United Kingdom in the Assembly of the League of Nations declared its policy to be that :—

> "The British Government considers it right that all disabilities of married women in matters of nationality should be removed, and that, so far as nationality is concerned, a married woman should be in the same position as a man—married or unmarried—or any single woman."

(8) That the above quoted policy is just and right, and consistent with the improved political position of women which has been so distinguished a feature during Your Majesty's reign and Your Petitioners ask for its uniform adoption in law throughout Your Majesty's Empire.

(9) That Your Petitioners have appealed to the respective Governments of the Dominions in which they live asking them to adopt legislation making this policy effective and to encourage its adoption in Your Majesty's other Dominions.

(10) That the Government of the United Kingdom states its inability to do so until the consent to such fresh legislation has been obtained from the respective Dominion Governments, while those Dominion Governments which are themselves willing to introduce such legislation state their inability to do so until the United Kingdom takes similar action.

(11) That it is vain for us to present our petition to any one Parliament of the Empire since the United Kingdom Parliament by statute and especially by the Statute of Westminster has handed over many of its powers to the Parliaments of the Dominions, and thus no one Parliament by itself can give us the redress for which we ask and which we are anxious to secure.

YOUR LOYAL PETITIONERS THEREFORE HUMBLY PRAY that Your Majesty will be pleased of Your Grace and favour to grant to those women who were British subjects by birth and who by reason of their marriage have been deprived of their British nationality the privilege of being free denizens of Your Majesty's Dominions by Your Majesty's letters patent under Your Majesty's Great Seal; and we beg You of Your Grace in this year of Jubilee to ask Your Majesty's Governments in the United Kingdom and each of the Dominions to consent to the adoption of uniform legislation to give to the married woman independent nationality in her own person on the same terms as a man or single woman.

And Your Petitioners as in duty bound will ever pray.